

SEX TECHNIQUE IN MARRIAGE

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SEX TECHNIQUE IN MARRIAGE

*A practical handbook for those who
are or intend to be married*

by

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with an Introduction by

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Van de Velde's work, *Ideal Marriage*, published by William Heinemann (Medical Books) Ltd., London, W.C.I., which is of the greatest value to the whole medical profession, and I regret I omitted any reference to it in the text.

HELENA WRIGHT, M.B., B.S.

“Even in the great revival of sexual enlightenment now taking place around us, there is rarely even the faintest recognition that in sexual enlightenment the one thing essentially necessary is a knowledge of the art of love. For the most part, sexual instruction, as at present understood, is purely negative, a mere string of thou-shalt-nots.”

Studies in the Psychology of Sex, vol. vi; *Sex in Relation to Society*, p. 517.—HAVELOCK ELLIS.

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I would rather have all the risks which come from free discussion of sex than the great risks we run by a conspiracy of silence. . . . I notice how silence has given place to complete and free discussion. In my judgment this is a great improvement. In the old days silence drove one of the necessarily natural instincts within. Nowadays people recognize sex as one of the great fundamental questions of human society, and all thoughtful Christians and citizens ought to take their part in discussing the great problems with which it deals. . . . We want to liberate the sex impulse from the impression that it is always to be surrounded by negative warnings and restraints, and to place it in its rightful place among the great creative and formative things.

*From a speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury
at a meeting of the London Diocesan Council
for Rescue Work held at the Mansion House
on April 4, 1930.*

INTRODUCTION

This book contains very detailed information about the ways in which the physical intimacies of married life may be successfully and happily managed. It is addressed to those about to be married in the hope that it may save them from mistakes and sufferings which have darkened married life for thousands of couples. Its sole purpose is to increase health and happiness.

None the less it is quite possible that some of you who are about to be married may shrink from reading such plain talk about the details of bodily intercourse, and the way in which to use the sex organs. You hope to find married life a happy and beautiful thing, but as you would not speak about its private aspects to anybody, so possibly you do not want to be spoken to about them even by a book. Perhaps you would say that if sexual intercourse is a natural thing, then Nature will teach the two of you how to manage it, and you do not want to study it or become self-conscious about it. You would prefer that all your experience should be spontaneous and impulsive.

It is true that many couples have passed through married life successfully with a minimum of knowledge about their own sex nature; but with

thousands of other couples that plan has not worked. It has led to mistakes and sufferings. Can you afford to take risks?

When no trouble is taken to learn how to make sexual intercourse harmonious and happy, a variety of complications arise. Very often wives remain sexually unawakened, and therefore inclined to dislike sexual intercourse. When that happens husbands do not experience what they long for, and are apt to be sexually starved. Neither husbands nor wives on those terms attain to harmony, and the result is nervous ill-health. Being strained, repressed, and strung-up, they find that little things irritate them to an absurd degree. Their mutual relations are spoilt by constant friction. The sex bond which ought to hold them firmly together while they are attaining mental and spiritual adjustment becomes in itself a cause of difficulties. The two who ought so to affect each other as to soothe, comfort, and stimulate one another, instead of that get on each other's nerves.

They wonder why love has not brought them happiness. With acute pain they realize that their common life is becoming a positive trial. And then perhaps they despair, and settle down to the ugly thing called mutual toleration. They often become cynical about marriage, and live through

many years together without having those years lightened and brightened by a single ray of pure romance.

In such cases the woman, never having been awakened, does not know what a woman's life may be, and yet inwardly she feels dissatisfied and disappointed. On the other hand the man remains conscious of definite and unsatisfied sex hunger, and, unless restrained by very strong motives, he is apt to seek from some other woman what he now despairs of obtaining from his wife—Even though his wife may remain the one woman he really loves.

And the cause of all this is not want of love. It is want of knowledge. Love alone is *not* enough. We also need to know. Lasting and satisfying happiness in marriage is a possibility for nearly all couples. But it is also a very great achievement, and to make it ours we need to learn and practise the art of living the married life. And that art is like all other arts in one thing: it has to be based on knowledge. There is a technique of married life, and husbands and wives need to know that technique just as surely as a painter needs to know the technique of his art.

And so to return to the possible reluctance of some to read a frank statement about sexual intercourse, and the way in which to use the sex organs.

Why should you shrink from knowing the truth about your body, or about the body of a member of the other sex? Do you not believe that God designed our bodies, and ordained their various functions? Do you not believe that it is His will that a husband and a wife should "be one flesh"? And if you do believe these things, do you not see that in itself sex intimacy is a natural, clean, and right thing? As a matter of fact it comes into life as a spontaneous and impulsive expression of affection, and its physical aspect is so united to love of heart and mind that the whole experience may be most radiantly and wonderfully beautiful.

Probably you know in some cold and general way "what happens in marriage." Possibly you shrink from it. The mere physical facts considered from without may repel you. What you do not know, very likely, is that when ardent affection has taken possession of your whole nature, and the deepest instincts of your manhood or womanhood are awakened, the whole situation will be radically changed. The giving and receiving of bodily caresses will seem natural, pure, and delightful. Your bodies will become means for the expression of love, and the fact of your mutual love will so dominate the situation that the whole process of intercourse will seem to you simply a matter of loving.

Further still, the instincts that lead to sex intimacy are so deeply rooted in our humanity, and so subtly interwoven with our moral and spiritual natures, that unless they find a true and harmonious expression, our whole development—physical, mental, and spiritual—is interfered with, and serious problems of an unnecessary sort come to beset us. Surely then it is worth while to take a great deal of trouble to secure a true form of sex experience. Some form of it you are certainly going to have in marriage. You *cannot* really want a second best.

You will find in what follows that you are being taught how to attain to an experience which will have sheer delight in it—how to arrange and manage matters so that both husband and wife may come to a culminating experience of intense pleasure, which is called an “orgasm.” Possibly some of you who are wives may have a half-conscious doubt whether it is quite consistent with spirituality of life, to find pleasure through a physical act. Because of that feeling it may be that some of you who are married have only submitted to intercourse because you held it to be a duty to your husbands to do so. Or you have done so because you wanted to have children. But you have retained a dislike for the experience.

And you are half proud of that dislike, as indicative of refinement of nature. Therefore when you read in what follows of the ways in which husbands may awaken responsive passion in their wives, you may shrink from the very idea of submitting to such a process. When, further, you are told that you *must* be willing to be awakened, and must let yourself go till you are carried away by spontaneous desire, you may react against the very idea of any such thing.

If you do, you will certainly spoil your marriage. Do think this thing out a little further! You have in you the capacity for responsive passion. Not one woman in a hundred is really without it. When you accept a husband he will hope to discover that responsive passion in you so that you and he together may experience a mutual joy which nothing else can bring. If and when you attain to that experience, your full womanhood will for the first time have come to birth. You will actually look more alive. You will know a fulness of life and a general sense of inward harmony which will literally crown your existence. The idea that by taking wholehearted delight in love's embraces you will become a less spiritual person is entirely untrue. As a matter of fact, after you have attained to a harmonious sex experience you will find yourself more highly

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vitalized, and therefore more able to appreciate every lovely thing through which the beauty of God is revealed to us, and more able to respond to spiritual realities.

It is also true, moreover, that if you do not consent to be awakened your husband will be deeply disappointed. He will know that he has missed the full experience of what marriage ought to mean. He will feel hurt in his very spirit by your coldness. He will not call it purity, he will call it prudery; and he will be right. He will wonder whether you *can* really love him, if you remain irresponsive. He will certainly see that your love has not been strong enough to break down all barriers, and bring you to a real fellowship of body and mind. He will know that you have not fully *given* yourself in marriage; and married joys are for those who *give* with royal generosity. So your marriage will be an incomplete thing. And I repeat incomplete marriage presents terribly difficult problems. Some of them are really insoluble problems. The way of Life is to prevent their arising. They ought not to arise.

Something still more direct has to be said to husbands. The real reason why a great many wives have never been awakened is simply that husbands have not understood their part in love's

fellowship. They have been such ignorant and awkward lovers that they have missed the real thing they wanted. That is why in the following pages there are explicit instructions on the art of love-making within marriage. Possibly some future husbands may resent the very idea that they need any instructions. They are sure that they feel ardently enough. They know that their responsive passion is waiting to find expression, and they are apt to say that their wives *ought* to be able to meet them with an equal ardour. That is exactly how a great many men spoil their own marriages, and fail their own wives. If you are going to be true husbands you need to take some care as far as possible to understand women. If you are too proud, or too much in a hurry to take that care, you will prepare unhappiness for yourselves. The idea that women *ought* to be ready to meet their husbands with an eagerness equal to their own is simply untrue to the facts. It is true that a small minority of women are spontaneously ardent and need no awakening. But with the great majority the fact is that though they are capable of passionate affection, that capacity has to be awakened in them by their husbands. They can feel, but they have to be made to feel. And very often they will not awaken quickly. Husbands may have to be very patient and give their wives time to come

fully to life. They may have to content themselves for a time with love-making that does not pass on to the culmination of sexual intercourse. If they want to know the best that may be they must wait until they know that the last reserves of their wives are gone, and that they are ready for a complete fellowship both of body and heart. And that may not happen for a number of days even after marriage.

Of course husbands may be insistent and demand intercourse. Probably they will not be refused. But they will not have on those terms a beautiful or a happy experience. They may get a certain purely physical satisfaction, but they will not get that communion of love in which body, mind, and heart all co-operate. They will miss the spiritual quality that may come into sexual experience. They will not know what it is to feel that they are being passionately loved—and that is an even more wonderful experience than merely passionately loving.

Therefore, the practical hints for husbands which follow in this book are of the first importance. A certain humility which takes the form of being willing to learn the art of being a sensitive and helpful husband is the condition of our fullest happiness. A woman is a delicate instrument, and

men need to learn delicacy before they can play truly upon that instrument. Her full womanhood waits in the background. It is her husband's great privilege as well as his essential duty to beckon it into full vitality. If bit by bit he can arouse her until the moment comes when by mutual ardent and joyous desire he and she become one, he will have an experience almost infinitely different from the mere experience of satisfying his passion with a woman who submits, but does not respond. It is because that latter experience is a poor, selfish, and superficial affair that sexual intercourse has been treated with so much suspicion by many moralists. But a real and full experience of oneness of flesh between a man and a woman has such marks of beauty and of joy upon it, that any man with a real instinct for what is morally true and fine must be compelled to set a high ethical value upon it.

I write these things as a minister of religion. I have performed the marriage ceremony for a large number of couples. I have said goodbye to them at the church-door with the ardent hope in my heart that they might attain full and true happiness. But I have often had something approaching to a sense of guilt within me because neither I nor the Church at large had done any-

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thing to procure for them clear and healthy knowledge of the terms on which success in marriage can be attained. I have therefore been longing for years that some such book as this might become available.

I have also during a long ministry had considerable contact with couples who had got into difficulties. I have had to watch husbands and wives getting on each other's nerves. I have seen the light of joy go out of the faces of both, to be replaced by a strained and tired look. And I have come to know that in a good many cases the real reason was simply that the couple in question had failed to attain sex harmony. The man had been clumsy, or the woman timid or cold or selfish. Or perhaps the man had been lethargic, and the woman quick and gay both in body and mind. And so they failed to tune in to one another, and life was overshadowed.

Of the marriages which do not begin with real love, it is hard to expect anything good. But when marriages do begin with love, and yet go into unhappiness, a very tragic thing takes place. But it need not be so. It would not be so if the plain facts in this book were honestly faced. Of course callous selfishness or drunkenness, or dis-

loyalty, will spoil any marriage. But it is not these low faults which spoil most. It is ignorance—ignorance which begets clumsiness, and then irritation, and then acute pain. And so the divine plan miscarries; and though God meant that through marriage men and women should attain to fulness of joy, they taste misery.

To prevent that is surely a religious interest.

A. HERBERT GRAY

SEX TECHNIQUE IN MARRIAGE

CHAPTER I

MARRIAGE: A SEXUAL RELATION

Sex is one of the most fundamentally important things in life. To understand it, to control it, and to enjoy it rightly should be the aim of every sensible grown-up person. Unfortunately, it is not considered a necessary subject in our system of education, and, in consequence, an overwhelming majority of people have no choice but to fling themselves into marriage, ignorant, unprepared, vaguely hoping for the best. The mysteries and difficulties of the successful accomplishment of the marriage act often baffle them, and, regretfully, and unnecessarily, they lose the best experience of life, a marriage triumphantly happy and satisfying to the whole of their natures.

What are the elements which together make an ideally happy marriage? Broadly speaking, there are two: first, companionship and co-operation between husband and wife, involving every side of their personalities—spiritual, mental, and physical; and secondly, parenthood. The sexual relationship is unique in human experience, because it is the only one which has the power to create new personalities. Desire of parenthood exists in nearly every normal person in a more or less strong degree. Being in love generally gives new strength to this desire, and it is an almost universal experience that married life,

no matter how perfect is the companionship between the two, remains incomplete without the possession of children.

This little book is not concerned with the parental side of marriage, nor with all the complicated questions connected with the creation of the ideal family of children. It is therefore taken for granted here that happiness in marriage depends in large part upon success in the parental relationship. Both husband and wife must realize that happy parenthood is an essential element in happy marriage. Luckily for many wives, the power of having children is not dependent on the enjoyment of the sex-act. There are countless women who have never been able to understand, or to take pleasure in the physical side of marriage, but who are, nevertheless, happy and successful mothers. They possess one of the elements of an ideal marriage.

Many married couples have also part of the other element, they are excellent companions, mentally and spiritually they are happy lovers; one thing only they lack—the right understanding and enjoyment of the sex-act itself. It is to help such people that this book is written. The writer wants to give such definite and practical information that no one after reading it can any longer be ignorant of the nature of the sex-act, or fail to know exactly how it should be performed.

To do this in a way which will be acceptable to everybody is a supremely difficult, if not an impossible, task. Sex experience is the most personal and intimate adventure that can happen to anyone. In a peculiar way it seems even more intimate and more difficult to talk about than religious or purely spiritual experience.

Undoubtedly the best way to achieve a happy, well-balanced sex life is to learn all the facts of sexual anatomy

and physiology in youth, long before they have any individual or emotional importance to the learner. Sex information would thus have time to become part of everybody's ordinary mental equipment, as familiar, beautiful, and friendly as any other piece of Nature's planning. Love and marriage could then hold no hidden terrors, as they too often do at present. Lovers would be free to go forward, knowing everything theoretically, each to make his own discovery of the magic of love's dictating.

We hope that in no very distant future this point of view will be shared and acted upon by educational authorities in general. A book of this sort will then, happily, be obsolete and unnecessary. In the meantime there are, of course, many married people who have discovered for themselves how to have a complete and happy sex life. This book is emphatically not for them.

The real difficulty about writing a book of this kind is that it is trying to describe the indescribable. Love and passion are not experiences which can adequately be caught and pictured in words; no one feels this more acutely than the writer. How else, though, are people who need this information to be given it?

Sympathy is offered beforehand to all those readers who feel that to put a beautiful and holy thing into words is to spoil it, and they are asked to reflect that any crudeness which they find in this book is the fault of clumsy execution, and not of intention.

Before entering on marriage, the significance, and the place of the physical side of sex, should be thoroughly considered. Reproductive physical union between two people is the only essential characteristic that distinguishes

marriage from all the other relationships possible to two human beings. Strong ties of mind and heart and soul are necessary too, of course, but these *can* be enjoyed by two people, in all degrees, outside the relationship of marriage. It is the presence of the sexual relation that constitutes the peculiar nature of the married state. This simple basic fact cannot be too clearly recognized.

To be able to understand sex, and its place in our lives and characters, it is necessary to look at it, and think of it against the background of evolution. We are able to produce children only by means of the sex-act, and the same condition is true of all animals and a large proportion of plants. Wherein then does our experience of sex differ from that of the animals? As far as we know, it lies in our appreciation of purpose. An animal performs its sex-acts as it does nearly everything else, by the working of what we call "instinct." Man is, we believe, working himself slowly upward, and is gradually replacing instinct by knowledge and will. At present we are in a transition stage ; every one of us is an unwieldy mixture of instinct, knowledge, and the wish to act rightly.

Sex desire is a natural characteristic of every normal adult woman and man, in itself as beautiful and blameless as moving or breathing. The idea that there is anything wrong or "nasty" in sex itself is a man-made notion entirely untrue, and evil in its effects.

Among animals the sex-act appears to take place for one purpose only, that of reproduction. Man, with his ever-growing self-knowledge, is gradually improving and amplifying his whole conception of sex. He is slowly realizing that there is far more in the phenomenon of sex than reproduction alone. He knows already that sex

activity touches the whole of his nature, mental and spiritual, as well as physical. In consequence, he is beginning to apprehend the sex-act in its true proportions. The false idea that intercourse undertaken for a reproductive purpose is more meritorious than intercourse performed purely as an expression of love, is dying. It never had any foundation in reason or science. Instead, it is coming to be understood that the sex-relation is one of the sacraments of life; to married people it should be a continual source of joy, health, self-fulfilment, and self-expression. Its hidden meanings and secrets are inexhaustible; rightly to understand and grasp them all would be to hold the key to many of the profoundest problems of nature.

As long as we have bodies, however, the physical laws of sex will remain true, and every healthy person will continue to have sex needs, which will have to be dealt with in some way or another. Modern civilization on the whole has clearly not found the best, or even reasonably satisfactory ways of using sex energy outside marriage; but a successful and satisfactory sex relation is within the reach of every married couple who are willing to take enough trouble about it. Knowledge, sympathy, courage, and persistence are the necessary weapons. With them success is certain.

THE NATURE OF THE SEX-ACT

What are the elements that compose a successful act of sexual union? They can be broadly divided into two classes, mental and physical. A human being is an exceedingly complex mechanism; sexual union is at once the simplest and the most complicated act it can accomplish. Among normal people the only reason for failure is lack of understanding of exactly what to expect, and how to get it. Let us consider separately each of the elements that compose sexual union.

Sex Union: A Mental Experience

The mental part of sex union consists of the states of mind of the actors. These are fully as important as any state of body. It is absolutely necessary that mind and soul should be in harmony with the body. In the presence of fear, anxiety, dislike, hurry, or any disturbing mental condition, successful sex feelings are, generally speaking, impossible.

The wife who means to have a happy sex life must realize that her mind has a great deal to do with it. She must decide with all her strength that she *want's* her body to feel all the sensations of sex with the greatest possible vividness. A wife who allows her mind to keep any unworthy ideas about sex lurking in its corners, is her own worst enemy. Her body will only yield its fullest joy, will only allow her to know the experience of physical ecstasy, if her mind and her soul are in active sympathy with it.

THE NATURE OF THE SEX-ACT

Like everything else worth having, the sex-act needs mental preparation. All disturbing thoughts should be deliberately put away, ideas of love and beauty should be welcomed, and the mind tuned to a condition of keen expectation.

The husband's mental preparation is different. Generally speaking, pleasure in the sex-act is easy and instantaneous to normal men. The husband's part is, therefore, to put himself imaginatively into his wife's personality, to determine that he will learn how to arouse in her the most intense and delicate sensations of pleasure of which she is capable. At the beginning of marriage, he more often than not has the rôle of initiator; his is the magic touch that will awaken his wife's physical nature; her future sex happiness will depend to a very large extent on his knowledge, delicacy, imagination, and sympathy. To this end he should study her, discover her latent desires, and encourage her to express her gradually increasing pleasure in the physical intimacies of sex.

The results of such conduct are far-reaching. At the first glance it may look as if the husband's mental attitude is expected to be purely unselfish, and, therefore, perhaps rather difficult. In reality this is not so, every true lover will find very soon that his own fullest and deepest happiness depends on his partner's response. Sexual union is essentially co-operative. There is no human joy possible to man greater than sharing the supreme experience of sex with a wife who is responsive to his every touch, whose whole being flames in ecstasy, whose soul and body become united to his in a bond stronger than any other we know in life.

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CHAPTER II

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profound effect it has on the mental and spiritual companionship of marriage. Man is a complex being, and, every part of his nature reacts on the whole. Successful marriage is largely a question of adjustment, and adjustment is always of at least three kinds—it must include harmony of spirit, mind and body. These three kinds of companionship should progress together, and keep pace with one another.

At the beginning, married life is new and strange to both partners; both must inevitably sometimes feel shy, sometimes entertain fears and doubts which are puzzling. A trouble shared is a trouble halved. There is no better habit than that of complete, fearless frankness. Many unsuccessful marriages might have been saved, if both partners had from the first trusted one another enough to have put disappointments into words, before they had had time to become hidden grievances and sources of silent estrangement.

Marriage is full of adventures, often disconcerting to accepted points of view. One of the unexpected results of intimate knowledge of a member of the other sex is the realization that the terms "masculine" and "feminine," as used to describe a person, are only relatively true. The pure masculine or the pure feminine individual is very rare. Most of us are mixtures. We all know men whose minds and natures have many feminine qualities, and women who are so nearly masculine that it is said of them in marriage "*she is the man of the two.*"

In writing a book of this sort it is impossible to do more than describe the typical feminine, the typical masculine attitudes to sex. It is probable that the descriptions will not exactly fit any one. One of the most subtle

adjustments of marriage is concerned with this question. The perfect relationship is able to give free expression both to the man in the wife and the woman in the husband, and thus to allow to both the fullest possible development of personality.

Sex Union : A Physical Experience

The physical elements in the sex-act are the bodies of the actors. It is highly desirable that everyone, before entering on marriage, should have a clear idea of how human bodies work in the sex-act, what parts of them are involved, and how each part is related to the whole.

There are certain important differences in the behaviour and the feelings of men's bodies and women's, but the fundamental nature of sex experience is the same in both. The whole skin surface of the body is provided with an uncountable number of minute nerve-endings, each able to convey a message of sensation to the brain. In some parts there are peculiar powers given to these nerve-endings: for instance, on the tongue they are capable of receiving and transmitting sensations of taste, in the ear, those of hearing, in the eye, those of seeing, and so on. Similarly, the sensations of sex have their particular place. The skin and the delicate membranes covering the outer sex organs are studded with thousands of nerve-endings, which have the unique power of conveying to the brain the feelings of sex pleasure.

In order that the various sets of nerve-endings shall be able to work properly, it is necessary to give each the right kind of stimulus. If a piece of coloured material is held to the ear, nothing will happen; give it to the eye, and the brain instantly knows all about it.

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Sex sensations work in the same sort of way; touch is the necessary stimulus in their case, but—and this is a large but—the right kind of touch must be given in the right place, or the sex organs will remain as dead as the ear presented with a piece of colour.

Sex, however, is a more deeply important matter to the whole person than any one of the special senses, such as sight or hearing, and it is a remarkable fact, and one worth much pondering, that under certain circumstances the entire body, with all its different powers, can be sensitive to, and receive messages of sex.

This is a mystery of the soul, as much as of the body. No one needs to be told that, to a lover, the briefest glimpse of the loved one, or the sound of her voice even for a moment, is enough to drag his attention away from whatever was occupying it, and to light his being with the thoughts and sensations of love.

It is common knowledge that a touch anywhere on the body can awaken sex sensations. This is because the whole area of the skin, under suitable circumstances, is peculiarly sensitive. The exact nature of the powerful attraction that can be exerted by a person of one sex on one of the other is still unknown, but it is certainly made up of psychic and mental elements, as well as physical ones. A difference of sex alone is not enough to evoke attraction between two people, the minds and souls of the two must also, to some extent, be sympathetic to one another. We will return to this fact later, when we are discussing the art of love.

CHAPTER III

THE SEX ORGANS OF MEN AND WOMEN

Not all creatures reproduce their kind by the method of sex-union. Some organisms increase in numbers by the simple means of dividing in two every now and then. But in what may be called the "two-sex plan" every individual is begun by the fusion of two, single unlike elements or cells. They meet, literally become absorbed into one another, and the new unit so formed develops into the new individual. Apparently, Nature's object in having two different sexes is to ensure the greatest possible amount of vitality to each new generation.

The sex organs in both sexes are of two kinds, the parts that actually do the work, and the parts that are only capable of providing sensations. The working parts consist essentially of two factories where the single, life-giving cells or elements are manufactured, of passages through which these cells can be released, and of a place where the new individual is safely protected during those stages of its development in which it cannot live by itself. The sensation-providing parts are simply special places on the outer surface of the body studded with special nerve-endings.

There are essential differences in the nature of the reproductive cells of the two sexes, and several similarities. Both are too small to be seen with the eye alone, both are made of clear jelly, and both are rounded in shape. The male life cell, however, as well as being round, possesses the finest possible tail, by means of which it has the power of wriggling itself along on a moist surface. The female

life-cell has no power of movement by itself—it has to be moved by some force outside it.

As arrangements are in human beings, it is necessary that the early stages of the new individual must take place in conditions of security. Therefore the meeting between the two reproductive cells must be within the body of the woman. How efficiently this is carried out, we will now try to understand.

The Male Sex Organs

Let us consider first the working parts of the male sex organs. These organs form one continuous system, but they can be divided into three parts: the factory, the store-room, and the passages.

There are two factories—smooth, hardish masses, roughly oval in shape—which are carried side by side in the pouch of loose skin that hangs in front of the junction of the thighs. The anatomical name for the factory is the testicle, or testis, and the name for the pouch is the scrotum. The inside arrangement of a testis is exceedingly complicated, special sets of cells being continually engaged, during the adult life of a man, in manufacturing millions of male life-cells, or sperms. How they do it is a secret as yet unknown; the only materials brought to the working cells are the streams of blood and lymph which are always flowing through the testicles, as they are through every other organ of the body.

Starting from each testicle there is a thin tube which runs up into the groin on either side, and then dives down into the lower part of the abdomen. Within this region the two tubes join up with the passage that goes through the length of the penis—the name given to the erectile sex

organ of the male. These tubes are called the spermatic ducts, and they form the paths through which the millions of sperm-cells flow from the testis as they are ready.

Although sperms are continually being manufactured, they are only released from the body during sex excitement at the climax of the sex-act. In the intervals they are stored in two sets of very fine tubes, about 20 feet in length, which are coiled tightly together and form a cap over each testis.

Nature shows economy as well as efficiency in her designs, and here we have a good example of economy of mechanism. In the general working of the body it is necessary to have a way out for its fluid waste products; in sex activity it is necessary to have a means by which the sperm-cells of the male can be safely introduced into the body of the female. Nature has arranged that one piece of tube shall perform these two functions so perfectly that neither can ever interfere with the other.

We can now picture the working parts—namely, the factory, or testis; the long tube, or spermatic duct; the store-house; and the final, short piece of tube through which the sperms escape from the body.

The *sensation-providing parts* of the male are, strictly speaking, a small area. They are limited to the skin covering the penis, and that covering the scrotum. The most acutely sensitive part is the cone-shaped tip of the penis, where the skin is of a special and more delicate nature than that covering the rest of the body; the whole length of the penis is the next most sensitive, and the scrotum the least. In both sexes, however, the whole skin area of the body can produce, in certain circumstances, sensations that tend to arouse sex-desire. We must,

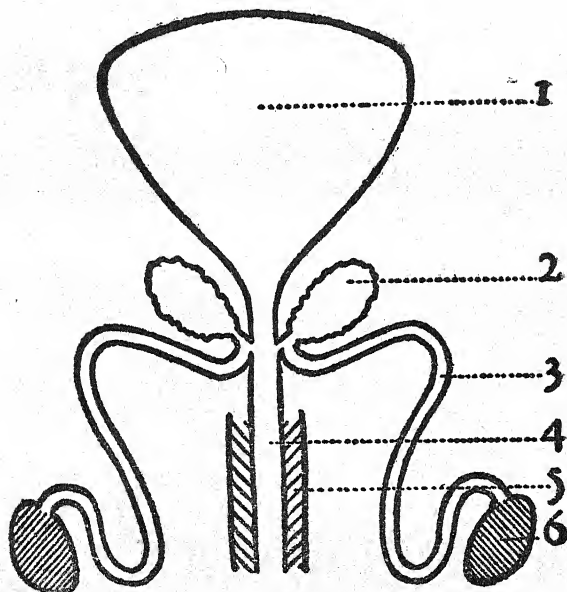
therefore, include the whole skin when we are considering all the sensation providing parts. How these various parts work together, we will consider later.

The Female Sex Organs

The two factories of the female life-cells are not unlike those of the male in appearance, they are also smooth, solid masses, rather larger than a chestnut. They are called the ovaries. In two ways they differ from the male factories, in position, and in the absence of a tube leading directly from them. The ovaries are inside the body, deep in the lower part of the abdomen and at the back, one lies on each side, close to the bony wall. The working principle of the ovary is different from that of the testis. In a boy's testis, before the age of sexual activity begins, at thirteen or fourteen, there are no sperms, but as the age of puberty, or sexual capacity, approaches, the sperm-making cells in the testis begin the manufacture of sperms, and having begun, they continue throughout the life of the man, making them in enormous numbers. It has been calculated that at each sex-act from two to five million sperms are released from the body.

The ovaries of a new-born girl baby already contain, in germ, all the egg-cells that she will ever produce. Up to the age of beginning sex activity they remain quiet, all the egg cells in a similar stage of development. At puberty a change comes over the ovary, and from then onwards, at more or less regular intervals, one only of all the thousands of sleeping egg-cells, begins to develop by itself. It slowly grows larger than its neighbours, and, probably by the pressure of its growth, finally makes a tiny slit in the outer surface of the ovary. Through this slit it escapes loose into the spaces of the lower abdomen.

THE SEX ORGANS



THE MALE SEX ORGANS

- 1. Bladder
- 2. Fluid-producing sacs
- 3. Passage for sperms

- 4. Penis
- 5. Spongy erectile tissue round penis
- 6. Testis

SEX TECHNIQUE IN MARRIAGE

How the two ovaries work together is not exactly known, but it is highly probable that the egg-cells develop alternately, one from the right ovary and then one from the left ovary, and so on.

Lying between the two ovaries, in the mid-line of the body, is the womb, the place where the new individual is safely housed during the stages of its development before its birth. The womb is hollow and made of muscle, similar to all the muscles in the rest of our bodies. The characteristic of a muscle is that it can contract and expand and change its shape, and so cause a movement of the structures, usually bones to which it is attached. We can bend our fingers because the long thin muscles are attached at one end to the bone in the finger-tip, and at the other to the bone in the forearm. When the muscle shortens its length, the finger has to bend. There are two chief differences between the muscles of the womb and those of the limbs. The limb muscles are moved under control of our conscious wills, the muscles of the womb are not. Limb muscles grow with the body, and, speaking generally, when they have reached maturity they stop growing, unless some special work is required of any group of them, in which case, as we all know, any muscle can be induced to develop to a surprising extent. The muscles of the womb have this power of being able to develop in answer to a special need to an extraordinary degree. In the resting condition the womb is, roughly, pear-shaped, stalk downwards, and measures about three inches in length, two in width, and one in thickness. When it has within it a developing egg-cell, it grows with the baby, and reaches the comparatively enormous size necessary to contain an infant just before birth. During birth, it is the muscles of the womb that

contract and do most of the work that pushes the baby into the world. After birth the womb muscles shrink, and in a few weeks they have come back to their original size.

In the male, it will be recalled, there is a continuous passage, leading from the testis to the outside, and along this passage sperms travel on their way to the female genital organs, but in the female there is a remarkable gap between the ovary and the womb. How, then, do the egg-cells, or ova, which are periodically set free into the body spaces, find their way into the womb?

We have said that the womb is pear-shaped, having a body that is flattened from back to front, and broader than it is thick. At each corner of the broad part there is a short tube, also made of muscle, ending in a ring of tiny filaments or fingers. The tube is soft, and hangs loosely, and the ring of fingers is capable of movements which are rather like those of the suckers of a sea-anemone. When the egg-cell breaks out of the ovary, it is set free in a comparatively large space; fairly close, on each side, are the waving fingers at the end of the tube leading to the inside of the womb. Somehow, perhaps by chemical attraction, perhaps by following currents made by the moving fingers in the moisture which is everywhere present in the body's interior, the egg-cell is seized by the fingers and directed into the tube. Once there it can only move in one direction, towards the womb; the muscles in the wall of the little tube contract in rhythmic waves, and take the egg-cell along its length.

During the course of its journey one of two things must happen to the egg-cell: it may meet and fuse with a sperm, or it may not. The process whereby the egg-cell meets and fuses with a sperm is called fertilization. When

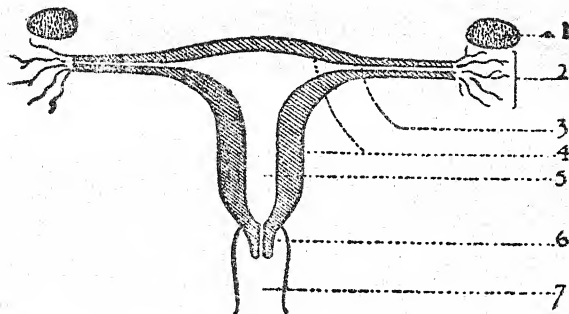
this occurs, the egg-cell embeds itself in the womb, and immediately begins the long story of its development into a new individual. Conception has taken place. If there is no fertilization, the egg-cell moves on through the womb, carried by the slight currents of moisture that are always flowing there, to the vagina, and so passes unfertilized out of the woman's body.

The vagina is the name given to the short wide passage which connects the lower end of the womb with the outside. The stalk of the pear, or mouth of the womb, is suspended in the top of the vagina, and projects into it a little way, in the manner shown in this diagram.

Vagina is a Latin word meaning sheath, it was so called because of its purpose, the male sex organ or penis fits into it like a sword into a sheath.

The sensation-providing parts in a woman are partly on the outside, and partly hidden. They are more complicated than those of the male. As in the male, acuteness of sensation varies: least sensitive are the two large folds covered with ordinary skin and hair, which run from back to front, between the thighs. Protected by them in the centre in front, is a small round body, about the size of a pea, movable to a slight extent, and coated with delicate membrane, which is always more or less moist. Its anatomical name is the clitoris. This little organ is capable of giving the most acute sensations; the tissue of which it is made is similar to that of the penis, and during sex stimulation it has the same power of filling with blood, and thereby becoming larger and harder than it is in an inactive state. The only purpose of the clitoris is to provide sensation; a full understanding of its capabilities and place in the sex-act is therefore of supreme

THE SEX ORGANS



THE FEMALE SEX ORGANS: WORKING PARTS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ovary | 5. Cavity of womb |
| 2. Waving fingers | 6. Mouth of womb |
| 3. Fallopian tube | 7. Vagina |
| 4. Muscular wall of womb | |

importance. Running from back to front, inside the large folds or lips, are two smaller and more delicate folds, the inner lips. These join in front of the clitoris in a narrow fold which makes a hood for the further protection of the clitoris. The membrane covering the inner lips is sensitive, less sensitive, than the clitoris, more sensitive than the outer lips.

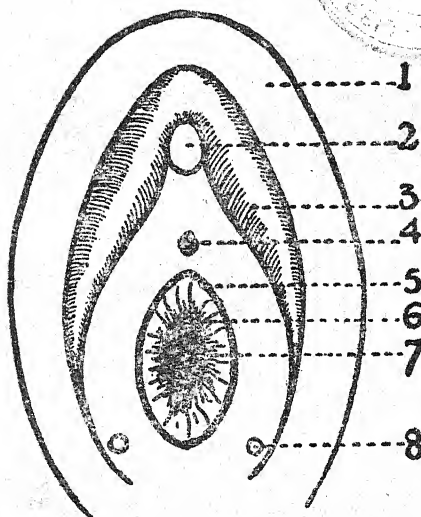
In the mid-line, a little way below the clitoris, is the small opening through which the bladder discharges urine. Also in the centre, and more towards the back, is the opening of the vagina. Before sexual intercourse has taken place there is a flat, narrow ring of soft membrane attached to the vaginal opening all round its edge, making the actual hole appear much smaller than it really is. This ring seems to serve no particular purpose, it is called the hymen, and during the first few sex-acts it is inevitably stretched, or split in one or more places.

The moist membrane lining the vagina is an important seat of sensations that differ in kind from the sensations of the clitoris, but are capable of an almost equal acuteness.

As we said before when describing the male, the whole of the skin of a woman's body is capable, when stimulated, of arousing sex sensations. Unlike the male, however, the female has also special areas on the general skin surface which are particularly sensitive—such as the lips and the breasts. These will be dealt with fully in the fifth chapter.

On each side of the entrance to the vagina is a minute gland, called Bartholin's gland. The purpose of Bartholin's glands is to pour out a special slippery fluid which runs down the inner walls of the vagina, and lubricates

THE SEX ORGANS



THE FEMALE SEX ORGANS: SENSATION-PROVIDING PARTS

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Large lips | 5. Edge of vaginal opening. |
| 2. Clitoris | 6. Inner edge of hymen |
| 3. Small lips | 7. Cavity of vagina |
| 4. Tube from bladder | 8. Bartholin's gland |

SEX TECHNIQUE IN MARRIAGE

them for the reception of the penis. Without such lubrication the contact of the dry skin of the penis would be painful and unpleasant.

We have now considered the working parts and the feeling parts of the sex organs of a man and a woman, and are in a position to understand how a perfect sex-act should be accomplished.

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CHAPTER IV

DIFFICULTIES

Before describing the performance of the perfect sex-act, we will clear out of the way the difficulties that often present themselves at the beginning of married life, and which, if not solved, are enough to prevent success.

There are many small points which cannot be made clear in a description of the shape and uses of the sex organs, and which are therefore best dealt with by themselves. They have no relation to one another, nor is it possible to say which is more important than any other. We must simply take them one by one.

Before beginning married life, it is necessary for both partners to realize the nature of the changes that take place in the penis, under the influence of sexual excitement. Ordinarily the penis is soft, and so limp that it is incapable of being moved without being handled. During the preliminary stages of sex feeling, a greatly increased flow of blood comes into the penis and fills up all the spaces provided. The effect of the extra amount of blood is to make the organ hard and solid. It now stands out by itself at an angle from the body, with the tip pointing upwards, and in this condition it is said to be "erect." Naturally, when full of blood, the penis is altogether larger than it is at other times, and full allowance must be made for this increase in size during the first few months of marriage when the wife's vaginal opening has not been stretched very much.

The angle at which the erect penis holds itself corresponds with the slope of the vagina, which is upwards and slightly backwards from the outlet. It is a good plan for

the husband to ascertain with his fingers exactly what is the direction of his wife's vagina, and in this way to save her pain. Often it happens that when this precaution is not taken, the erect penis is pushed in straight backwards, causing acute discomfort by coming up against the back wall of the vagina.

The hymen, or small ring of tissue which is round the outlet of the vagina, is a very variable structure. Sometimes it is so tough that introduction of the penis is impossible without causing so much pain that not only are the wife's prospects of pleasure ruined for the moment, but a shock is given to her mind which often takes a long time to die away. There is no æsthetic or other kind of value in the pain inevitably given during the sudden stretching or breaking of the hymen. In primitive races the hymen is always stretched before marriage, and there is no reason why we should not adapt this humane custom to our times. Opinions on this point vary very much; common sense seems to say, if pain *has* to be given, why not get it over before its presence can spoil the memories of the first days of marriage? Gentle, continuous stretching is all that is necessary. Any woman doctor would teach a girl how to do this herself with her fingers, a little at a time, during the few days before marriage. Or, if circumstances make that method impossible, there is no reason why the husband should not stretch the hymen with his fingers, as a preliminary to full intercourse.

For many women such a course of action would have several advantages. In our day it is more or less taken for granted that the sex-act shall be completed on the first night after marriage. But why should it be? A number of women date their sexual unhappiness from the fact that their husbands had no patience, and penetrated

the vagina before they were emotionally or physically prepared for it. Time and gentleness in this matter bring a golden reward. It is not difficult to introduce the stretching of the hymen into the preliminary love-play so gradually that the woman is unconscious of any pain at all. Such a method of stretching has another strong merit; if done gently enough, and always with the definite design of arousing sex-feeling, it will powerfully help to awaken vaginal sensation. The establishing of acute pleasure by stimulation of the vaginal walls is sometimes only accomplished after months of marriage. A procedure on the lines here suggested, carried out before every sex-act, will help considerably.

Sex activity is in the nature of a duet; sometimes one voice dominates, sometimes the other, but harmony is only created when both are singing. If wisdom demands that full penetration shall not take place immediately, and the husband restrains himself and allows his feelings only to show themselves as a gradual crescendo, the wife must exercise her imaginative sympathy, and realize the strain which her husband is voluntarily imposing upon himself. The mechanism of physical satisfaction is different in the two sexes. An inexperienced wife may find it hard to understand that the gentleness and delicacy of her lover's behaviour towards her is not a measure of his own desires. She needs arousing; he needs relief. Her love must be discerning enough to divine his wishes, and active enough to help him to attain them. Ejaculation, or the release of the sex fluid from the male, is easily achieved in a number of ways, and brings with it enough mental and spiritual satisfaction to tide over the time until her initiation is complete, if the husband is allowed to feel that his wife understands and partners him. The

exercise of a little imagination will ensure that no physical discomforts will obtrude themselves on these first experiences.

Penetration itself often presents difficulty, because the erect penis is not, like a finger, provided with a delicate sense of movement and direction. The trouble is easily overcome if the wife will use her hands and direct the penis gently into the outlet of the vagina. In the next chapter the exact moment in the sex-drama at which she should do this is explained, and those directions are followed there will be no pain at all either to the husband or the wife.

There is also a right and a wrong way of removing the penis from the vagina after ejaculation has taken place. If the husband has reached the climax before his wife has reached hers, the muscles of the vaginal walls will be in a condition of some tension, and they may resist the withdrawing of the hard penis. Soon after ejaculation, however, the penis always returns to its ordinary size and softness, and then it can be removed with no difficulty. All that is necessary, therefore, is to wait a few minutes. The completion of the wife's orgasm in such circumstances is absolutely necessary, and ways of doing this are described in the next chapter.

The attainment of complete sex-pleasure in a woman is the fine flowering of a healthy body. It is almost impossible in the presence of fatigue, worry, or ill-health. Two of the commonest causes of lack of pleasure among the wives of to-day are insufficiency of rest, and constipation. Life is so full, and work so arduous, that most women are in the habit of going to bed tired out. It is not reasonable to expect vivid, active pleasure under such circumstances. The wife who means to have a happy sex-life must do some

thinking and planning. If the sex-relation is sincerely held to be one of the sacraments of life, it is worthy of care and preparation. Sex-acts need not necessarily occur often, but they should always be beautiful.

Constipation works in two ways to prevent the development of sex-sensation. The term constipation means the continued presence in the bowel of waste products which should be eliminated. It has been proved that processes in the body are never at a standstill. If waste material is not evacuated as soon as it is ready, the body re-absorbs poisonous products from it. These poisons are powerful, and have a lowering effect on the whole system, which includes, of course, the capacity for sex-enjoyment. This can be said to be a chemical effect of constipation.

There is another, a mechanical effect. The presence in the rectum, or back passage, of masses of material, results in discomfort, or even pain, during sex intercourse, because the wall of the back passage is stretched and pressed upon. Such pressure is inevitable since the two passages are immediately close together. The wish for a happy sex-life, therefore, provides an added motive for keeping in perfect bodily condition.

Many wives are distressed by a small practical matter concerned with the toilet of the sex-act. It is desirable that everything to do with it should be as dainty and attractive as possible. After the completion of intercourse, the whole of the sex-region of both partners is naturally moist, and in the wife's case, some of the seminal fluid may flow out of the vagina and endanger the clean linen of the bedclothes. An extra handkerchief, and a folded towel, or cloth, placed under the wife's hips beforehand will deal unobtrusively with this difficulty.

CHAPTER V

THE PERFECT SEX-ACT

We have considered the apparatus that is necessary for the performance of the sex-act, and can now turn our attention to the act itself.

Described as shortly and simply as possible, the act consists of the insertion of the penis into the vagina, and the deposition there of the fluid containing the male life-cells, or sperms. The sperms are then free to swim up into the womb through its mouth, and fertilize the egg-cell, if it is present. This constitutes the process of conception.

Scores of books have been written about sex from every point of view; my aim in this little book is strictly practical, and I will not therefore enter into theories or arguments.

What makes two human beings perform the sex-act together? There are two chief reasons, both of which may be in action at once. They may desire to have a child, or they may have such a strong affection for one another that they feel an overwhelming need for giving it some satisfying outward expression. Nature has endowed every normal person with sex powers, and needs; the institution of marriage exists to satisfy all of them.

During the early years of marriage the wish to have children is almost universal, but there inevitably comes a time in every family when, for one reason or another, enough children have been born. The love and affection which the parents feel for one another should be deeper and fuller than it was at the beginning of marriage, and for the rest of their lives the sex-act will be to them a necessary and beautiful expression of their love for one another.

We have now to consider exactly how the greatest perfection of pleasure and satisfaction can be enjoyed by both husband and wife. Of what nature is this pleasure? Like everything else which is unique, it is almost impossible to convey in words a convincing picture of it to someone who has not experienced it. There is a strong desire for contact, which permeates the whole bodies of the two persons, and there is a characteristic and indescribable feeling of pleasure and well-being which is centred in the external sex organs. Rhythm plays an important part in sex-sensation; the two actors instinctively find themselves moving, so that the degree of contact is always changing; a cessation of movement means the dying down of sensation.

As the act proceeds, the intensity of pleasure rises, thought is abandoned, a curious freeing of the spirit, very difficult to describe, takes place. It is as if there were, hidden among the sensations of the body, a spiritual counterpart, a pleasure of the soul, only attained for a few seconds, bringing with it a dazzling glimpse of the Unity which underlies all nature. The rhythm of movement becomes quicker, the breathing deeper, the sensation of pleasure more and more intense, until both the man and the woman together reach a climax. This climax, called the orgasm, is marked by the sudden flowing forth of the seminal fluid from the man, and by a series of short, rapid muscular movements by the woman. After that there is peace; a sense of complete relaxation and content flows into mind and body, and usually there is a desire for sleep.

There can be nothing difficult about the achievement of a successful sex-life, because it is the universal experience of primitive peoples, and of Eastern civilizations.

The difference between us and them is one of approach. Primitive peoples never leave a knowledge of sex to chance; among them it is a subject of serious and reverent education. Sex is recognized to be one of the central mysteries and beauties of life, and it is considered a deep social disgrace if a man marries, and proves himself incapable of rousing and satisfying his wife's physical nature. The Indians and the Arabs gradually discovered and wrote down probably all there is to know about perfection in the sex-life. Our civilization has taken a different standpoint; for one cause or another so many mental hedges have been allowed to grow up round the subject of sex, that the simple, beautiful truths about it have become invisible. The average attitude of mind towards sex, in our country, is unhealthy, ignorant, and thoroughly unsatisfactory. There are, however, signs of improvement, demands for knowledge and instruction are heard here and there, and attempts are being made to supply these demands. This book is one. It is based on the knowledge that a healthy and satisfying sex-life is a beautiful and creative element, and should be the possession of every married person.

More and more people are coming to understand why it is so important to have a happy sex-life. Authorities on the mind are telling us that lack of sex-satisfaction in marriage is not a merely negative matter, on the contrary, it is a potent source of positive ills of all kinds. Many apparently mental disagreements between married people have their origin in disharmony in the physical sex-life. Our natures are so complex that no marriage can be completely happy if it does not give satisfaction and development to the body, as well as the mind and the spirit.

Failure generally results from an ignorance of the fundamental differences between a woman's and a man's

responses to sex stimulation. Given the right circumstances, a man's sex feelings are easily and quickly aroused, and quickly satisfied, and the actual sensations are limited to the relatively small area of the skin of the penis. A woman's desires, on the contrary, are neither quickly aroused nor quickly satisfied.

Naturally these differences vary in amount between race and race, with climate, and with temperament, but taking everything into consideration, it remains true that women need more time for full stimulation than do men.

It may be that women take longer because their responses are more complex than those of men. Speaking generally, Nature seems to have designed definite rôles for the two actors in the sex drama. But again it must be remembered that these definite rôles are more or less theoretical ; in actual life it is by no means always the man who takes the initiative. In a perfectly balanced married life the husband and wife are free to vary their modes of expression according to mood or circumstance. The description which follows must therefore not be taken too rigidly. Usually at the beginning the man is the initiator, the woman the willing recipient ; the husband, understanding his wife's nature, has the joy of rousing her gradually, of creating in her an ardour equal to his own. A woman's body can be regarded as a musical instrument awaiting the hand of an artist. Clumsiness and ignorance will produce nothing but discord, knowledge and skill evoke responses of limitless beauty. Before marriage, intending husbands should be made to realize that a man may become a worthy lover only with patience, knowledge, and practice. If a wife remains cold and unresponsive, it may be the husband's fault ; however willing she is, she cannot arouse her own feelings. On the other hand no amount of skill and ten-

derness on the husband's part can be successful unless the wife is willing to be roused.

During the early days of marriage mistakes are sure to be made : both sides may become temporarily irritated, and disappointed, and these first mistakes are sometimes allowed to become the starting-points of an unspoken resentment which lasts for years. There are two sure guides through this difficult time, perfect frankness from the outset, and an unswerving expectation that with patience and experience full success must come.

Every complete act of love follows a definite scheme ; it should be an epitome in miniature of the whole relationship of the two lovers. A wife needs to be courted and wooed afresh every time her husband seeks her. It is necessary to have an atmosphere of peace and leisure ; hurried love-making cannot be successful. Words play the first part ; the husband tries to show his wife how much he loves and desires her, and so evokes in her mind the feeling of being desired. It is a pity that darkness is so constantly the setting chosen. In a subdued light the lovers can watch each other's faces, and the husband can tell by the expression of his wife's eyes whether he is fulfilling her wishes or not. Next comes a time for all sorts of love-play, the husband definitely seeks to arouse his wife's feelings by caressing her body in every way that occurs to him.

It has been discovered that in the majority of women the most complete response follows if they are stimulated in a definite sequence. Touching and caressing certain areas on the skin surface of the body powerfully excite sex desire. These areas seem to be related to one another, so that if the order of stimulation is followed, the response becomes more and more ardent. First, and most obvious,

is the region of the mouth and face, and with them are the base of the neck and the lobes of the ears. The earliest sign of response is flushing of the cheeks, and if this occurs ultimate success generally follows. The second responsive area is the skin covering the breasts, and particularly the nipples. Stimulation here is very powerful, because the nipples are constructed of delicate and very sensitive tissue, and they are capable of becoming firm and erect under the caresses of a lover's lips or fingers.

By this time the woman's whole body will have become awake and responsive, and she will welcome contact anywhere on the skin surface. She ought to be ready for the beginning of direct stimulation of the sex organs themselves. It is here that rhythm plays an essential part. Sensation in the clitoris and the immediately surrounding mucous membrane can only be aroused by the application of constantly changing pressure. Continuous pressure very soon becomes painful. Fingers are by far the most delicate instruments for arousing definite local sex-sensations. There is an infinite variety in the number of possible movements, and every husband should discover the kinds of pressure and the rhythms of moving which give his wife most pleasure. Probably no two women are exactly alike.

During this stage of the sex-act comes the moment which shows that the wife is ready for full reception of her husband. In describing the anatomy of the genital region we mentioned two little glands, called Bartholin's glands, and we said that their purpose is to supply a slippery fluid. As soon as the clitoris is sufficiently excited, these glands work, and pour out their fluid over the walls of the vagina. This appearance of moisture is the sign that the vagina is prepared for the penis.

If during the preliminary stages the man keeps his attention on the effect he is producing on his wife, and concentrates all his mental power on a desire to please her, he will find it quite possible to control his own feelings until the right moment.

The question of the positions of the husband and wife during the completion of the act is very important. There are many possible positions, and some of them are described below. Most of the successful positions fulfil at least two essential conditions: contact can be maintained with the clitoris, and both partners can move their hips freely.

The sensations aroused by stimulation of the walls of the vagina are generally more difficult to excite than those of the clitoris. Sensation in the clitoris seems to be natural to every normal woman, but it often takes considerable time and patience to establish a vivid degree of sensitiveness in the vagina. The relative intensity of sensation in the vagina and in the clitoris varies very much in different women, and different moods of the same woman. Theoretically it might be said that the ideal type of feminine sensation is concerned with the vagina alone, but that ideal is seldom realized. As a general rule it is true to say that a woman has not attained full sex maturity until she is able to feel pleasure as acutely in the vagina as in the region of the clitoris.

The suggestions which are here given are intended mostly for the help of those who are beginning to establish sex relations, and it is for that reason that stress is laid on the importance of maintaining clitoris stimulation. Nearly all women find vaginal sensation through, as it were, the gateway of clitoris sensation. When they have fully experienced both, they will vary their sex-life according

to mood and temperament. For the full experience of the orgasm or sexual climax, intense feeling must generally be present in both places.

The last part of the act, after penetration has taken place, is usually, though not necessarily, the shortest. The wife is now in full co-operation; by the movements of her hips, and consequently of the vagina, she helps to add to her husband's pleasure, at the same time she ensures that at each downward movement of her husband's the clitoris shall be adequately stimulated. This last matter is very important; many wives are unable to reach the climax because their husbands fail to realize that rhythmic friction of the clitoris is necessary right up to the end of the act.

It sometimes happens that even with the greatest care the husband has his ejaculation before the wife has arrived at the climax, he must therefore always make sure that his wife has complete satisfaction. With a little experience and sympathetic observation he will know this without being told; at the moment of orgasm there are characteristic muscular movements of the wife's sex organs, and several deep, quick breaths, which have only to be watched for, to be recognized easily. In any case, if there is mutual confidence the husband will find no difficulty in ascertaining whether his wife is satisfied or not.

If the orgasm has not occurred, it can easily be produced if stimulation of the clitoris is continued. This can be done in many ways, one of the simplest is to effect a change of position. If the wife comes uppermost, and lies face downwards, she can find the hard bone just above the root of the penis, and, by pressure of the clitoris on this bone and by movements directed as she

needs, induce her own orgasm. Or if the husband has learned delicacy and skill, he will, by movements of his fingers in the region of the clitoris, be able to help his wife to attain her orgasm. None of these devices is ideal, and no couple should be content until they have learnt how to experience orgasm together. As the acuteness of sensation grows in the vagina, so gradually will the difficulty of reaching orgasm together disappear.

It is a curious fact that sex maturity has opposite effects on the man and woman with respect to the time each needs to reach full excitement and the orgasm. Inexperienced men find it difficult not to come to the climax too soon. In the course of time, and with the establishment of habit, they are able to lengthen the interval before the climax. With woman it is the reverse, as she becomes experienced she can be roused to the climax more and more quickly. So does nature work towards a complete harmony in sex relationships.

Variety is as important in the sex-life as it is in everything else. What is the commonest cause of the breakdown of the marriage-tie? Surely it is a desire for something new. Monotony is the deadliest enemy of love. No one can be expected to eat the same food every day, or to wear the same clothes indefinitely. Why should not the same common-sense rule be applied to love? It ought to be the aim of every pair of lovers who know love to be an art, to study the question, and to think out new ways of loving, so that their mutual sex-experience will always have the element of freshness and novelty.

Nowadays many husbands and wives work together, and so see, a good deal of each other in sober, working moods. These wives would do well not to let their hus-

bands forget that they also have a feminine, decorative, even "frilly" side to their natures. After working all day with an efficient and businesslike companion, a husband feels a new thrill of pleasure if the evening brings him a charmingly dressed playmate, the same woman, yet not the same, ready for fun instead of work. As the years go by, different stages occur in married life. The chief problem at the beginning is generally the husband's, he cannot be content until he has charmed his bride out of all shyness, and made her a joyful and enthusiastic partner. Later comes a time when it is often the wife's turn to take the initiative. Nothing can be more pleasing to a husband than to know that he is the centre of his wife's desires, especially if that wife has learned the art of being a dozen women in one.

However active a man's nature may be, times inevitably come when he is tired, and lacks, for the moment, the energy for taking the initiative in love-making. These times are the wife's opportunity to show her many-sided nature, when she may woo her husband and charm him out of his fatigue. Usually he is the energy-giver in their love-play, now it is her turn. The more masculine the man is, the more subtle will be his pleasure in these occasional and temporary reversals of the sex-roles. In these moods he needs to be wooed, to be gradually awakened. A woman radiant with health and energy has the power of giving strength and rest to her lover, she can banish his fatigue, and in some mysterious way bring him back to life and radiance. At the present day much thought is given to household matters—food, servants, clothes, and so on—and little or none to the far more vital question of how to preserve the ardour and freshness of the honeymoon into old age.

How is variety to be accomplished? Chiefly by the employment of different kinds of caresses, and different mutual positions during sex-act.

What is the object of variety in the love-life? Surely it is that every marriage should be as stable as possible. What makes for stability? Happiness and content. The need for change and variety is inherent in human nature, married lovers who desire to satisfy each other permanently must take this fact into consideration.

The object of the married relationship, as far as its two actors only are concerned, is union—the union of the mind, the soul, and the body. Pleasures of the body are nothing in themselves; if pursued for their own sake they can end only in emptiness and disappointment. Used as an instrument for expressing union of the mind and the soul, the pleasures of the body are inexhaustible, and lead towards fulness and richness of life. The difference between these two ways of using the body is subtle and difficult to explain, but all lovers of experience know that there are times when their bodies are the means of conveying a sense of union which is deeply and lastingly satisfying, and others, when perhaps the actual expressions of physical love have been the same, but the inner sense of union has been wanting. The difference is probably psychological, and is governed by the real aims and desires that are in the minds of the lovers at the moment. If the best and fullest experience is desired, thought must be given to this aspect of sex-union. A permanent and satisfying relationship contains depth as well as variety, and it will avoid, at all costs, boredom and satiety.

The fact that a union which is founded on physical passion only, never lasts, is too well known to need em-

phasis, but is the reason for its inevitable failure always understood? The actual sensations of physical pleasure cannot be to blame; if present at all, they are always more or less alike. Attraction dies, and pleasure disappears, because man is not a purely physical creature. Whether he realizes it or not, he must have a relationship which involves his mind and his soul as well as his body, before he can be fully and permanently satisfied. If the body is always deliberately regarded as an instrument of the mind and the soul, possessing its own needs, of course, but never allowed to be master or dictator, boredom or satiety need never be feared. Thus looked at, the physical pleasures of sex are capable of infinite variety. No two acts of union need be alike, each is the reflection, or the interpretation, of a different mood. Ways can be found of expressing every possible mood and desire. The attitudes of the body during the sex-act can be varied in a number of ways. Most married couples are content all their lives to adopt only one position for sex intercourse. Many people have a vague feeling that the most usual position must be the only "right" one. This, I believe, is a pity, and involves a false view of the sexual relation. Theoretically speaking there can be no such thing as a "right" or a "wrong" position, for the object of all positions is the same. Positions can vary in effectiveness and appropriateness, and in the presence or absence of physical strain. Lovers cannot know which position is the best for them without trying several. Different races have different customs, and each of them probably thinks that only its own are "right." In this little book I do not intend to describe *all* the positions that have been adopted in sexual intercourse; some, indeed, are too complicated for general use, but I will give enough to indicate the main varieties.

1. By far the commonest position adopted by Europeans is face to face lying down with the woman on her back. This position needs no explanation. It is rendered unsuitable when there is great disparity of height between the partners. Many variations of it are possible according to the degree to which the woman bends or straightens her legs, and the presence or absence of a small firm pillow beneath her hips.

2. In the opposite position the two are lying, but the woman is uppermost. It is useful in cases where the wife is small and slight, and liable to be fatigued by the commoner position. Further, it has the advantage that the woman is free to move her hips as she pleases, and so is able to direct and control the degree of stimulation she receives.

3. In classical Rome the attitude with the wife astride was greatly favoured. The man lies on his back, with or without a pillow under his hips, his legs slightly bent to support the weight of the woman's thighs. She sits astride, with her trunk upright, or leaning a little backwards. A certain amount of care and practice is necessary for the successful use of this position. It has two advantages: firstly, as all the movements are made by the wife, it is, from the male's point of view, the most passive of all the positions, and therefore appropriate when the husband is fatigued or in poor health; secondly, the degree of sensation possible to both is higher than that produced by the other positions.

4. In the sedentary attitude the man sits, and the woman takes her place facing him, suspended across his thighs, with one leg on each side of his trunk. Mutual apposition is so easy in this attitude that it is a specially

suitable one for early married life, and it has the further advantage that both partners can move freely.

5. In the side-to-side attitude there are a number of serious difficulties. Its success depends on the relative proportions of the pair and, therefore, in some cases its performance is impossible. There is no choice in sides, but it seems more usual for the woman to lie on her right side, and the man on his left. The woman slightly bends her right thigh, and places it between the man's legs, her left leg she places uppermost, on the outer side of the man's right thigh. This interlocking of limbs allows the sex organs to fit conveniently together.

An advantage of the position is that it frees the woman from the sensation of weight and oppression which often spoils sexual intercourse for her in the most usual position. On the other hand, the man has less power and freedom of movement, and this he may find a drawback, except at times of fatigue. Small adjustments can be made by placing pillows under the hips of either or of both partners.

These attitudes are sufficiently varied for adoption at the beginning of married life. When lovers have practised them, and learned how to obtain from them the maximum joy possible, they will need no further directions. They will themselves be masters of the art of love, able to create new forms of expression which will put them for ever beyond the fear of boredom or satiety.

Every husband should remember Balzac's aphorism : "In love—quite apart from the psychic element—woman is a harp who only yields her secrets of melody to the master who knows how to handle her."

CHAPTER VI

OTHER PRACTICAL ISSUES

There are, in the ideal sex-life, many factors beyond the perfect performance of the sex-act. In this chapter we will touch upon those which come up as practical issues at some time or other in the lives of most married couples.

At the beginning of married life, one of the first questions to be asked is, "How often should we have sexual intercourse?" No strict rule can be formulated, but by certain indications each couple can find its own best habits. The sex-act is meant to be enjoyed, and to have an exhilarating effect on the persons who take part in it. It is safe to say that as long as both partners feel rested and refreshed after each act of sexual intercourse, they are doing rightly. Often a good deal of adjustment has to be made in this matter. Hardly any two people desire and need sex intercourse at exactly the same times, and it is therefore necessary that husbands and wives should be perfectly frank with each other, especially during the first few years of married life, when both are finding their way among new sensations and experiences. Speaking generally, the sex-act is more tiring to men than to women. This is natural, considering that the seminal fluid is one of the most highly complex substances manufactured by the body. Women differ enormously, according to race, climate, and temperament. Some are fully satisfied by one orgasm, some need more. The important thing is for each woman to discover her own needs; it is dangerous and misleading to listen to other people's experience and use it as a guide. If either partner feels exhausted, or even tired, after intercourse, that is a sign that he or she is

having too much. A short time of abstinence may be all that is needed to effect a cure.

When a number of different positions have been mastered, it will be found that they vary widely among themselves in the amount of fatigue that follows their adoption; it should then be easy to choose a suitable method of intercourse for every mood and condition of feeling.

The factors that govern acuteness of desire are not yet fully understood, either in men or women. There is a good deal of evidence suggesting that women pass through more or less regular natural and physiological phases of desire, which tend to be the same every month, and to have a relation with the dates of the menstrual flow. Marie Stopes, D. Sc., in her book *Married Love*, gives a chart showing a time of heightened desire just before the monthly period, and another about a week after it has stopped. It would be interesting and useful if women would show some intelligent interest in this subject. All that is necessary is to mark a calendar with one sign for days of desire, and another for the days of menstrual flow.

The present writer would be delighted to receive any such records. Every carefully kept record is valuable as a piece of evidence which will help us to understand more truly that elusive but important question, sex-nature of woman. Whether there is a regular cycle or not, it is certain that every woman has distinct differences of feeling, at different times. The wise husband will watch his wife, and encourage her to tell him about her moods. Where there is perfect frankness, a wife will also feel free sometimes to take the initiative in love-making when she feels inclined.

Whether any kind of regular rise and fall occurs in the sex desires of men is not known for certain. There is at least one definite physiological factor—namely, the condition of the two reservoirs or store-houses for the seminal fluid, described on p. 33. If these are full there is a certain amount of pressure on their walls, and it is known that that pressure is enough of itself to start the train of mental, emotional, and physical reactions which end in conscious sex desire. If circumstances do not permit sexual intercourse to take place, the body has a mechanism of its own for relieving the pressure. The reservoirs empty themselves during sleep, and peace is restored. A certain amount of sex desire is therefore known to recur in healthy men, just as hunger recurs after a period without food, or fatigue after exertion; in other words, there would seem to exist in men as well as in women a natural cycle of sexual desire. The other factors governing sex desire in men are complex, they have to do with upbringing, habits of mind, responsiveness to the unending sex stimulation of modern life, temperament, and so on. These are very much the same in their effects on men as they are on women.

It is often asked whether any harm results to the woman if the sex-act takes place during menstruation. This question is largely one of feeling. There is a certain amount of congestion in the pelvis at these times, and it is conceivable that rest is therefore better than activity, but that is all that can be said on the subject. No positive harm can be done. Speaking generally, the days of the menstrual flow are those when the woman is least inclined for the sex-act, but there seems to be a small class of women whose desire is strongest then. Nature is a better guide than any rule of ours, and if the spontaneous wish

for intercourse appears very markedly, it is wise to allow it free expression, whenever it occurs.

Many couples inquire about the advisability of intercourse during pregnancy, and after the birth of a child. No harm is known to follow a moderate amount of sex activity during pregnancy, and many women find that they have particularly strong desires in the first three or four months. Later there are practical difficulties caused by the growing size of the abdomen, and then comes the time when a change in the ordinary positions can be used with comfort to both. Immediately after labour there is no doubt that women need complete rest, but as soon as all tenderness has disappeared, and the desire for intercourse has returned, there is no reason why it should not be satisfied.

Before leaving this difficult question of times and frequency of intercourse, it would be well to consider one or two established facts about absence or diminution of sexual desire. There are times in everybody's life when sex desire seems to have disappeared. These times ought to be respected. They may have a number of causes: fatigue, ill-health, mental depression, and so forth. Whatever the cause, it is a serious mistake to attempt sex stimulation when desire is for the time being completely absent. If the cause is removed, desire will return. In some cases also, lack of desire may occur in cycles, just as heightened sex sensitiveness does, and is a natural characteristic of the person in question. It behoves young husbands and wives to watch for these recurring states of feeling in one another.

There is also a warning which should be given about experimenting with new positions for sex intercourse. In theory, all positions, if effective, are permissible; in practice any position which produces physical strain in either part.

ner is bad. From every point of view those positions which are simple, and incapable of giving a feeling of strain, are the best and the healthiest.

The question of masturbation is another one which troubles a number of people. Masturbation, as a term, strictly means the use of the hand to bring about a sexual orgasm, but the term has grown to cover practically any means, other than normal sex intercourse, which is used to produce local sexual feeling in the sex organs. A great deal of nonsense is written and spoken round this subject; indeed, only lately have psychologists and doctors begun to understand its true significance and place in the development of man. Probably every normal individual passes through a phase, longer or shorter, when masturbation to some degree takes place. The usual time for this phase is during childhood, when explorations of all kinds are being made. If wisely dealt with, this phase passes, and develops into normal adult sexuality. The great dangers about a habit of masturbation are two in number, the attitude of mind of the masturbator, and its effect on his or her later sex development. It is bad for anybody to perform an act of which he disapproves. It is worse to be in the grip of a habit of which he not only disapproves, but longs to rid himself, and cannot. At present there is still so much secrecy and mystery about sex in all its manifestations, that it is very difficult even for an adventurous-minded person to find and hold a reasonable point of view on this subject. In this little book it would be unsuitable to go into the matter exhaustively, and it is impossible to give a categorical judgment, because complete agreement has not yet been reached among the authorities.

A few things, however, can be said with reasonable certainty. Masturbation is always a substitute, and there-

fore has unavoidable inherent disadvantages. Generally two motives at least lead to its performance, a positive pleasure in the sensation produced, and a desire for the relief of emotional tension. An act performed merely for the production of personal physical sensation, and nothing else, is necessarily of a low order of merit, but it is not necessarily harmful. It is, perhaps, the acknowledgment to themselves of the fact that masturbation is purely selfish that is at the root of the spontaneous feeling of shame experienced by most masturbators, who fall into the habit more or less unconsciously.

The importance of the whole matter lies more in the psychological realm than in the physical. Well-fed people are not worried by thoughts of food; they eat when they are hungry, and then think no more about it until the next meal-time. The same is true of people leading a healthy sex-life; they are not obsessed by thoughts of sex. Indeed, when the mind of any individual becomes over-filled with ideas and wishes relating to sex, it is generally a sign that he or she is sexually unsatisfied. In order to do the best possible work, the most important condition of mind is harmony. Everyone must decide for himself how that harmony is to be obtained, but he should realize, even if he has no moral objection to masturbation, that the practice has great disadvantages. The normal sex-act concerns two people, and employs their highest faculties of mind and imagination; self-relief is at best a self-limited affair, and vast areas of the personality that are healthily used in the normal act must be left out. This curtailing of natural reactions cannot be in itself a good thing. Further, masturbation before marriage, if practised to excess, may have unfortunate physical results. The sex organs are as susceptible to habit as any other part of

the body, and they may become so accustomed to responding to some particular method of self-relief that enjoyment of the normal sex-act may become difficult to establish. Especially can this occur in women, because the stimulation most generally used before marriage is purely of the clitoris (see Chapter III), whereas in perfect marital stimulation the vaginal sensation predominates.

There is another way of dealing with this question. Sex desire is a form of energy, one of a myriad ways in which the life-energy of an individual can be used. Energy has a peculiar characteristic, its form can be changed without any loss of power. This phenomenon is very familiar in the world of physics. Electrical energy, for instance, can be changed into many other kinds, for example, as light in our streets and houses, as sound in our telephones and wireless sets, or as heat in our radiators and cooking-stoves. The fundamental law governing these activities teaches that although energy may change its form any number of times, it can never be lost. The same law is true of the life-energy of human beings, and wise application of this law offers us a solution of many of our sex difficulties. During times of separation between lovers such knowledge is particularly useful. Sex desire arises spontaneously, perhaps as part of a general sensation of exuberant health and well-being, and becomes conscious in the individual as a feeling of tension. Failing an opportunity for direct sexual expression, something has to be done about this feeling. The attempt merely to suppress it, in other words, to use the will for the purpose of denying its existence, or to push it down below the level of attention, is unwise, and in the end harmful in its results. All life-energy is potentially good, and these recurrences

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of sex desire ought to be recognized as possibilities for good. Their usefulness to the individual depends on his other habitual outlets of energy. Every healthy and well-balanced person ought to have some work in which he or she is keenly interested, and knows to be worth while. Indeed, the possession of some such interest may make the difference between invalidism and health and happiness. To effect a satisfactory change in the direction of expression of any emotional energy is not easy, and in the case of a fundamental instinct like sex, it is particularly difficult. It can be done, however, with complete success.

For the method to succeed, it is necessary to have a form of congenial work as an already established habit. The materials for this work should be prepared, and the individual should then allow himself to recognize definitely that he does, in fact, feel sex desire, and that this desire is physically located more or less in the sex organs. Then while mentally considering the work as vividly as possible, he will find that the energy transfers itself from the sex organs to his mind, and that he is able immediately to set to work with all the energy he possesses. The method is admittedly ineffective to those to whom the whole idea is unfamiliar; it is only intended, however, as an indication of one method whereby sex energy can be usefully and creatively directed.

During the first few days of marriage, in cases where the bride has had absolutely no experience of sexual stimulation beforehand, an orgasm induced by the husband's hand, and entirely by way of clitoris sensation, may be a kind and gentle way of introducing a timid and perhaps frightened girl to a happy sex-life. Anything is better than the rude shock and pain of complete penetration.

without the necessary preparation of awakened desire and preliminary sensation. Occasional experiences of this kind can do no harm, because on the whole the mental and psychological emotions are the same as in ordinary intercourse; furthermore, such experiences may be of great service at times when the usual methods of sexual intercourse are for some reason unattainable.

It will be noticed that nothing has been said in this book about the voluntary spacing of children. I believe that every married couple should know at least enough about contraception to enable the husband and wife to decide intelligently whether they believe it is right and proper for them to use contraceptives and, if so, how they should use them. But these questions are adequately dealt with in a book by Michael Fielding,¹ to which I refer readers needing up-to-date and accurate information.

I do not pretend that in this little work I have dealt exhaustively with all the problems that lovers must solve in order to make their marriage happy and permanent; but I hope that I have written enough to persuade them that a harmonious marriage relation is worth striving for, and may be achieved by all lovers who are prepared seriously to study love as an art.

To progress in the knowledge, experience, and expression of love is the noblest aim in life. Every happy marriage should be a living source of spiritual light, radiating warmth and love to all those who come within its circle.

¹ *Parenthood, Design or Accident*, Paper 2s. cloth 3s. 6d., (Williams & Norgate Ltd.)

CHAPTER VII

MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is the technical term used to describe the regular periodic flow of blood from the womb in all healthy women who are already leading a well-balanced life. There are many popular words in general use: the best known are "period," "monthly time," and among hospital patients, "courses." The origins of the first two are obviously derived from the time coincidence of the bleeding cycle and the lunar month, both twenty-eight days. A great deal of popular superstition has gathered round this similarity, which could not have failed to strike attention as soon as both natural occurrences were observed and the numbers of days involved in each were counted. There is, however, no connection traceable between the two phenomena.

This is not the only kind of wrong idea which has, in popular thinking, gradually accumulated round the whole subject of menstruation. Because, unfortunately, it is the commonest experience that women suffer some degree of pain or physical discomfort just before and during the days of bleeding, it has come to be the general opinion that pain and discomfort are a necessary and natural part of the function of menstruation. It is the object of this chapter to explain as far as is known what exactly is happening in the body at these times and to show that a perfectly healthy women should have no pain or discomfort whatever.

It is a striking feature of all living plants and animals which propagate by means of special sex organs that the

power to reproduce themselves is not present from the very beginning of their individual lives. The sex organs themselves are there, but they are immature and unable to function while the main growth of the plant or animal is taking place. Lengths of time and degrees of growth at which the sex organs begin to be active vary of course enormously in the vast range of existing plants and animals, but the principle holds.

In the description of the female sex organs in Chapter III this characteristic was noticed (p. 34) as being true of the human ovary, which does not begin to set free egg cells until the age of puberty. During the years which have intervened since Chapter III was written, a great deal of research work has been carried out both in animals and man, and the views expressed on page 34 about the existence in the ovaries at birth of all the eggs which will ever be developed are being modified.

It has long been known that the ovaries are the sources of a special chemical product which is the female sex hormone. The word hormone comes from a Greek word meaning to impel, and it is used to label a number of secretions, each of which is made in a particular gland and poured straight into the blood stream: thus the thyroid gland in the neck produces the thyroid hormone, and so on. The way in which the various hormones work together is extremely complicated; the views of the experts are continually being modified, and it is impossible to give more than a general outline of the part played by the ovary and the female sex hormones in our explanation of menstruation.

The riddle to be solved is the relationship between the behaviour of the ovary and the behaviour of the

womb. All that is visible to the woman is a flow of blood emerging from the vagina lasting for a few days, and recurring more or less regularly: nothing here to suggest that eggs or the ovaries are concerned in the matter at all. Our knowledge has been put together bit by bit as research workers in laboratories all over the world publish their discoveries; there are still many gaps in our information, but enough is now known to make a consistent story, and its main outlines will probably not be altered again.

The obvious characteristic of menstruation is its periodicity: it appears and disappears according to a timetable which is constant within limits for each particular woman. The bleeding comes from the mouth of the womb; the womb itself is an easily accessible organ, its neck and mouth can be seen by means of a simple instrument put into the vagina, and various experimental procedures can be undertaken without damaging the woman. It was therefore the womb itself which first received attention when the meaning and nature of menstruation began to be investigated, and one way of telling our story would be to follow the history of research and work backwards from the bleeding. This would, however, misplace the emphasis, as we now know that the appearance of blood in the vagina is the end of the process and not the beginning. It will give a clearer understanding if we abandon the history of discovery and begin with the first event in the body, which has to do with the starting of each series of monthly discharges, and work forwards from that.

Underneath the brain, near the centre of the head, is a small but extremely important organ called the pituitary body. The various hormones secreted by the pituitary

gland form an interesting and complicated study in themselves, and one group of them has been found to be the starting-point of the processes which end in menstrual bleeding. The particular hormone in question is made only in the front part of the pituitary and is called therefore the anterior lobe hormone. It is poured into the blood circulation, and when it reaches the ovaries it has the remarkable effect of stimulating the growth of a crop of egg-cells—not, as used to be thought, only one at a time. It is true, however, that among the newly developing eggs one particular one grows far more rapidly to a much greater size than any of the others. As it grows a spherical envelope is formed round the egg-cell, and this secretes a special kind of fluid. The little system so made is called a follicle. A specially formed cone of cells brings the developing follicle nearer and nearer to the surface of the ovary, where eventually it makes a bulge on the ovary's otherwise smooth surface.

The fluid in the follicles contains the second hormone concerned in the menstrual cycle, and this is the essential female sex hormone, generally called oestrin. During the time that the follicles, large and small, are developing in response, as we said, to the presence in the blood of the pituitary hormone, oestrin is continually being formed and poured into the blood stream. It has been proved by many experiments that oestrin is the responsible agent which begins at puberty to stimulate the changes in the body which are specifically female, such as the development of the breasts, and it is the continued and regular production of oestrin by the follicles in the ovaries which maintain these characteristics throughout the active sex life of the individual. The pituitary hormone continues to stimulate the single, specially large follicle until the

pressure of fluid inside the envelope, together with a thinning of the envelope itself at a spot on the highest point of the bulge, causes the envelope to rupture and the fluid to escape with a certain amount of force into the body cavity. While the follicle has been growing the egg inside it has also been developing, and it is finally shot out of the follicle with the fluid in a condition ready to be fertilized. The further adventures of the egg and its journey down the egg-tube have been described in Chapter II and need not be repeated.

The setting free of the ripe egg into the body cavity is called ovulation, and it is the most important event in the recurring cycle of ovarian activities. It marks the peak, as it were, of each cycle. After the ovulating follicle has released the egg, it and all the other follicles which had begun to grow during that cycle rapidly degenerate and their cells become merged in the general structure of the ovary. There is an essential difference, however, between the fate of all the partly developed follicles and the large one which succeeded in maturing the egg.

As soon as the follicle has ruptured, its walls collapse and the cells composing them begin a new set of changes. Instead of the sphere filled with fluid a solid yellow mass of new cells is formed which also have the power of secreting hormones. This time two different ones are produced: one of them is the same as that made by the follicle, oestrin, the essential female sex hormone, and the other is a new one called progesterin. The yellow body is generally referred to by its Latin name, the corpus luteum, and the hormone is therefore called the corpus luteum hormone.

Oestrin and the corpus luteum hormone are together responsible for initiating and maintaining the changes which take place in the womb and which follow their own programme according to the time-table which belongs to the womb. How these two sets of changes are related together in the twenty-eight days of the monthly cycle is an extremely important practical question which is not yet completely understood. We will go into it further when the part played by the womb has been described.

The cells forming the lining of the cavity of the womb are the ones which undergo most of the changes, and luckily these are accessible for observation by the method of curetting, or scraping the inside of the womb. Hundreds of scrapings have been taken at all times of the cycle: they have been very thoroughly compared with one another, and we have so been enabled to understand what is happening to the lining of the womb right through the menstrual cycle. It is a curious story and can only be understood by comparison with the function and behaviour of the lining of the womb during pregnancy and birth. The womb exists for the sake of the growing embryo. Its function is to provide housing and nourishment for the fertilized egg from a few hours after development has begun until the completed baby is ready to be born. All the nourishment which the embryo receives during this time comes to it of course through the blood stream of the mother, but as the needs of the mother's body and those of the embryo are very different, the mother's blood cannot be supplied directly. An organ has to be developed to be the intermediary between the maternal circulation and the developing tissues of the embryo. Here comes in the function of the lining of the womb. Its job is to prepare for the reception of a fertilized egg, and this

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it does regularly every month whether fertilization takes place or not. Let us see first what happens in the womb of a woman who has had no sexual intercourse.

As soon as menstrual bleeding is over the cells forming the lining of the whole space inside the body of the womb begin a process of repair, and the stimulus for this comes from the oestrin which has then just begun to be poured into the blood stream by the ovaries. The supply of oestrin is kept up for ten to twelve days, and at the end of that time the new cells in the lining have been completely restored and have attained their full size or height. Towards the end of this part of the cycle the ripe follicle in the appropriate ovary has burst, the egg has been set free and the yellow body, or corpus luteum, has begun to be formed. The formation of the corpus luteum means the addition of corpus luteum hormone to the oestrin already being supplied to the womb, and the combination of the two hormones is maintained till near the end of the cycle, and in consequence the cells of the lining of the womb remain at their maximum height till about the day before the next menstrual bleeding begins. During this last twenty-four hours or so the lining cells begin to break down, spaces are formed between them in which blood collects, and as more cells become destroyed blood begins to ooze through into the cavity of the womb and to flow out of the neck of the womb into the vagina, and so eventually out of the body, and the woman perceives that menstrual bleeding has begun. Some time during the days of bleeding the unfertilized egg comes into the cavity of the womb from the egg-tube and is carried out of the body in the blood flow. The destroyed lining cells are washed out with the blood as menstruation proceeds, and at the end of the bleeding time, generally in from three to

five days, the cavity of the womb is denuded of these cells and the scene is ready for a new cycle to begin, with the fresh pouring out of oestrin from the new lot of follicles developing in the ovaries. And so it goes on, over and over again; fresh lining cells begin to be formed after menstruation, develop to a maximum, remain in that condition, break down, and are washed away.

Now let us see what happens when fertilization takes place. Events in the cycle must obviously be the same both in the ovaries and the womb up to the point in time when the egg reaches the egg-tube. Here the sperms, which have swum up from the vagina through the neck of the body of the womb, meet the egg. One of the sperms fuses with the egg, and immediately division begins in the fertilized egg. From this point onwards the behaviour of the lining of the womb is quite different from its behaviour in the absence of fertilization, and the history of the ruptured follicle in the ovary is also different.

Instead of beginning to break down, the cells of the lining of the womb grow still more and the whole lining becomes thicker. The developing egg is pushed out of the egg-tube by the rhythmic movements of the muscles of the tube walls, and it reaches the cavity of the womb. Here it finds everything prepared for it. The egg attaches itself, apparently at random, to a spot on the wall and exhibits the power of burrowing into the substance of the wall. The lining closes up behind the growing egg, so forming a bulge on the surface of the cavity. In the meantime the part of the lining into which the egg has burrowed undergoes remarkable changes: a new organ is gradually formed between the egg, which should by this time be called the embryo, and the wall of the womb. It is this organ which

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acts as the necessary intermediary between the blood circulation of the mother and the body of the embryo. It is called the placenta, or afterbirth, and its presence is essential to the maintenance of the life of the embryo as long as the embryo is in the womb.

After the baby is born the afterbirth becomes detached from the walls of the womb, leaving a very wide area of the lining in a raw condition needing repair. The separation of the afterbirth causes a certain amount of bleeding, and when it has entirely come away and the walls of the womb have finally contracted, the bleeding stops, and repair and regeneration of the cells and of the lining begin.

In the meantime the ovary has been going through a special programme which only occurs during pregnancy. The yellow body belonging to the fertilized egg-cell goes on growing until it reaches a size which takes up most of the surface of the ovary, and this size is maintained for the whole duration of pregnancy. Relatively enormous quantities both of oestrin and of corpus luteum hormones are produced, and can be demonstrated by a special analysis of the urine. When birth takes place the corpus luteum disappears and the ovary once more begins its usual cycle of behaviour.

We are now in a position to understand the ways in which menstruation and birth resemble one another: there are two striking features which are common to both processes—bleeding and the separation of cells from the lining of the womb. In menstruation the bleeding is usually small in amount and the lining cells come away in small shreds. In birth there is generally a relatively large amount of bleeding, and the afterbirth is a conspicuous object measuring six or seven inches across. It is there-

fore possible to describe the two kinds of bleeding by the same expression and to think of menstruation as a "false birth," and the second half of the ordinary monthly cycle as a pseudo-pregnancy, because the persistence of the yellow body in the ovary, which is essential to the continuance of pregnancy, covers the last two weeks in the cycle and controls the maintenance of the newly repaired lining cells. Again, the results of the breakdown of the yellow body are similar: in the case of menstruation the lining cells begin to degenerate and bleeding begins, and at the end of a pregnancy the baby is born and the afterbirth separates and comes away accompanied by bleeding.

When once it is understood by the general public that the bleeding in menstruation is a necessary and entirely healthy part of the functioning of a woman's body, we ought to be able to do away with all the wrong and depressing ideas which now surround the whole subject. Instead of being a kind of illness, menstruation, when it occurs in a normal manner, is a sign of *health* of the ovaries and the womb, and girls should not be encouraged to refer to it by such names as "the curse" or being "unwell." These names have arisen of course because it is such a common experience that women and girls do feel pain and discomfort during menstruation. As knowledge increases and people are realizing more clearly how a healthy life should be led, the number of women suffering menstrual discomfort is steadily decreasing. This is a good sign, and universal attention ought to be directed towards spreading the truth that there is nothing whatever in healthy menstruation to cause pain or discomfort. The rising generation of girls should be brought up to expect

no pain, and if, as menstruation establishes itself, pain or discomfort do make their appearance, the advice of a doctor should immediately be sought, investigations should be carried out and maintained until either the pain is cured or a cause discovered which cannot for the moment be removed.

Investigations should cover at least three fields, all of equal importance: the general health of the girl, her habitual way of life, and the local conditions of her womb and ovaries. Nowadays no one need fear such an investigation; painful examinations are a thing of the past, or ought to be. Modern specialists have ways of obtaining all the necessary information about her body without hurting even the most sensitive girl. It is obvious that if girls can begin their menstrual experiences in an optimistic atmosphere and know that it is their duty to keep healthy and to get help as soon as menstruation becomes painful, an enormous improvement will automatically be brought about in the attitude of mind and standard of health of all women in the community.

I do not exaggerate when I say that a healthy girl or woman should not find it necessary to make any modifications in her way of life or in her activities for her days of menstruation. She should go on with her daily bath, paying, if anything, more attention to the details of the cleanliness of the external sexual organs than usual. Physical exercise should not be diminished; indeed, it has been found by experience in a very large girls' school that pain during menstruation was cured and remained cured by the addition of the special exercises for the regions of the hips and abdomen during the days of the menstrual flow.

The bleeding itself has to be dealt with, of course, and the number of devices on the market for absorbing the blood without discomfort to the wearer is always increasing. For married women one of the latest and best is a sponge cut to a suitable size and shape and fitted with a means of easy removal. After being damped and squeezed out dry, the sponge is generally pushed right into the vagina, and the end of silk curled up and pushed in after the sponge. If the right size has been chosen, the sponge will lie comfortably in the vaginal passage and the wearer will be unconscious of its presence. At the necessary intervals the sponge is pulled gently out by means of the end of silk. This is easy to find with one finger-tip because it stays where it was put, just inside the vaginal opening. The sponge will of course absorb a certain amount of blood and no more; if it is not removed then, an overflow will occur. Plenty of soap and water should be used each time the sponge is washed, and the cleansing must be very thorough. When clean and squeezed dry, the sponge is again inserted. A little experience is necessary to find out how often the washing is needed, and when this has been obtained the sponge can be used with perfect confidence. The advantages of the sponge over the usual pad supported by a waist belt of some kind are obvious. Physiologically too, the sponge is more reasonable than the pad because the blood is absorbed by the sponge immediately and then removed altogether, whereas the pad can only receive the blood after it has flowed out of the vagina, and so contact with the air is established and the characteristic odour allowed to develop. When a sponge is used no odour is present, because the entrance to the vagina is kept closed when the body is in its usual positions. Unfortunately sponges are only easy to use after the hymen has been

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stretched, because the average hymeneal opening is too small to allow insertion and removal to be comfortably effected.

The question of the regularity of the menstrual flow has recently been investigated very thoroughly. From a comparison of hundreds of calendars kept by healthy women, each covering a full year, it appears that the striking feature of the rhythm of menstruation is its *irregularity*. The popular idea that unless the flow appears to the day every four weeks something must be amiss is, apparently, contrary to the truth. Variations from about two to five days in both directions are the usual experience. No woman, therefore, who has general good health need give any attention to small irregularities in menstrual dates.

CHAPTER VIII

MENOPAUSE

The time in a woman's history popularly known as "the change in life" has a bad reputation. Most women dread its coming, and are prepared to believe that a number of unpleasant happenings are bound to overtake them in the natural course of events. Unfortunately there has been a good deal of evidence in the past and in the present to support this view, but as physiological research advances, and as our knowledge increases, the medical profession is gradually learning how to control the unpleasant symptoms connected with the disappearance of the monthly flow.

Menstruation generally begins between the ages of twelve and fourteen, and stops between forty-five and fifty. The time of duration is very variable, but it is a general observation that if it begins early it will go on late. It is not to be looked upon as a block of years which shifts forwards or backwards in the lives of different individuals; rather is the number of years during which menstruation lasts a sign of degree of fertility. The woman who has had an early puberty and whose menstrual rhythm goes on till nearly fifty, tends to be more fertile than the one who begins to menstruate at sixteen or seventeen and stops at forty.

As we saw in the explanation of menstruation the cycle of happenings is caused by the regular interaction of various glands and their hormones. The pituitary in the head starts the cycle, its hormone stimulates the ovary, follicles in the ovary begin to develop and to produce oestrin and, later, corpus luteum hormone, and these work

on the womb and produce the characteristic changes in the cells of its lining. The supply of each hormone stops when its work is done, and the pituitary begins all over again after the womb has finished menstruating, and so on through the years of reproductive activity.

Towards the end of the period of fertility the first change which is noticeable is an irregularity in the appearance of menstruation. Every possible variation occurs, whole months may be missed, bleeding may start twice in a month, the flow may sometimes be scanty, sometimes very abundant; but on the whole a gradual falling off takes place, the gaps become longer and longer, the flow less and less, until eventually it ceases altogether. The total time taken over the complete process also varies within wide limits. In a few exceptional cases the disappearance is abrupt; the menstruation rhythm, having behaved in its usual way, suddenly stops, and no further flow ever appears; but, speaking generally, from two to three years elapse before both the bleeding and the symptoms have completely disappeared.

The essential changes in the ovaries and the womb which occur during the menopause are still the subject of much research work. We understand the general drift of events, but have not fully made out how the hormones behave in detail. The end results are clear—both the ovaries and the womb gradually decrease in size and cease to function; in the course of a few years the ovaries have become small fibrous bodies with no trace of eggs or follicles, and the womb shrinks to about the size of a cherry. During this time the production of the three hormones, that from the pituitary gland, and oestrin and corpus luteum hormones from the ovaries become less and less and finally cease altogether.

Symptoms associated with the degeneration of the reproductive organs vary enormously in different individuals and in the same woman at different times.

A complete list would include the following: spasmodic sensations of heat all over the body, sudden flushing of the skin, most marked in the face and neck, sweats of varying severity, headaches, difficulty in sleeping soundly, irregularity of the heart rhythm commonly called "palpitations," and a variety of psychological symptoms. These last are often most distressing features in the symptom picture, and they seem to occur in almost any form. One patient of mine was extremely embarrassed because she found she was unable to prevent herself bursting into tears whenever the King was mentioned; another had her nightly sleep constantly broken by sudden panics in connection with her household duties—fears which were unfounded in fact; while the majority of sufferers complain of unreasonable fits of black depression and emotional instability in general. Mental concentration is often impaired, and memory becomes spasmodically unreliable. Finally the whole picture is coloured by a more or less constant feeling of fatigue.

It sounds alarming enough, this list, to justify any bad reputation for the change of life; but in practice, of course, no one woman has more than a selection of the possible symptoms, and these, no matter how severe they may be, are always only temporary, and given prompt and intelligent treatment are capable of a high degree of relief.

We do not know yet what are the exact causes of the various symptoms, but it looks as if the organization of the body finds it difficult to go on functioning smoothly

while important changes in hormone production are proceeding. This is so analogous to what happens in a large business concern when the executives and the programme are being changed that we ought not to be surprised.

The years marking the end of reproductive power come inevitably to every woman who lives long enough; what ought to be her attitude of mind towards this phase of her physical adventures, and how should she behave?

Considering what has been said in the chapter on menstruation it should be obvious that there is a close relationship between the health of a woman during the change of life and her experiences all through her years of menstruation. It is therefore the duty of every feminine reader of this book to feel a challenge to her pride of health. Having read thus far she should ask herself whether it is possible to improve the way her body is behaving at her monthly times. If she is not certain that she is getting the best service from her physical machine, she should go at once to a modern-minded doctor and have the whole matter investigated.

This is the first and most essential step towards having a healthy and easy change of life.

The next most important condition of health is attitude of mind. No woman should allow herself to feel gloomy or to expect ill-health when her periods stop. On the contrary she should realize that the menopause is just as much a part of the natural, healthy processes of the body as is puberty. She should therefore make it her aim to understand as much as possible about the question beforehand, and determine that she will, in the light of that knowledge, and with the help of her doctor, go through

her change of life with so little discomfort that she will hardly know that anything is happening.

This is not the appropriate place to go into methods of treatment—that is the doctor's responsibility; but I can say from the personal experiences of my patients that no subject is at the moment more hopeful than the treatment of the discomforts of the menopause. Every year of research gives us, as doctors, more understanding, and given intelligent and persistent co-operation from our patients we can now always safely promise a marked improvement in menopausal conditions, no matter how serious the symptoms look at first sight.

There is another aspect of this question which often causes unnecessary anxiety, and that is the relationship between keenness of sexual desire and the cessation of the menstrual flow. Many women fear that the whole of their sex life must necessarily disappear when their periods stop. Luckily there is no physiological foundation for this unhappy idea. Sexual desire during the menopause has nothing to do with the functioning of the ovaries or the womb. Proof is abundant in the history of the thousands of wives who produce any number of children without ever having experienced sexual satisfaction. If, therefore, reproduction is possible in the absence of sexual sensation, why should the stopping of reproduction have any effect on the presence of the sexual desire?

A little thought will reveal the fallacy of the notion that one is at all dependent on the other. Sexual sensation is felt, as is explained in Chapter III, in the external sex organs and just inside the vagina, and neither of these regions is concerned in the changes of the menopause.

Further, sexual desire in women is largely governed by psychological considerations, and if a successful sex life has been established during the early years of marriage it is more likely to be strengthened than weakened when menstruation ceases. The reason for this is not immediately apparent: it has to do with the question of energy which we discussed on page 58 et seq. During the years of reproductive activity, and while the children are growing, every mother necessarily uses a definite proportion of her life-energy in connection with her children. During and after the change of life this channel of activity more or less disappears. No more babies are possible, and the existing children are by that time probably more companions than young creatures needing a continual expenditure of maternal energy, and consequently a proportion of life-energy is set free. The natural outlet for such energy is a renewal of sexual keenness for the husband, who should be prepared for this phase in his wife's development. Again, in the case of thousands of mothers whose sex experiences have been overshadowed by the fear of unwanted pregnancies because of the absence of adequate contraceptive technique, the years after the menopause are the first ones in which they can enjoy peace of mind, and many of these women only wake up to their own sexual possibilities when their reproductive life is over.

Even for wives who have never had children the same arguments hold. Generally speaking there are two classes of these women—those who have no children because they don't want them, and those who want children but are unable to conceive; in the first case there is nearly always a mental preoccupation with the thought

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of the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy occurring; and, in the second, hope is not entirely lost while the periods continue, so that in both cases there is a flowing out of energy into the reproductive channel.

Taking everything together, therefore, it should now be plain that there need be nothing gloomy about the experience of the change of life for women.

Before leaving this theme a word ought to be said to dispel popular misapprehensions about a so-called "change of life in men."

From a physiological point of view no such phenomenon exists, or could exist. Unlike the ovaries, the testicles, having once begun to function at puberty, go on during the whole of life unless temporarily interrupted by serious illness or extreme fatigue. There is no periodicity about the formation of sperms, and no cessation by the special cells in the testicles of the production of the male sex hormone.

The idea of a change of life in men has doubtless sprung up because of the observed fact that sexual potency tends to decrease with age. The reason for this is a general one. Sexual power in males is an accompaniment of good health and abundant energy. That it can and does continue is proved by the numerous examples of men becoming fathers at advanced ages. The way to preserve sexual keenness into old age is the way of temperance and general healthy living. Sexual capacity is certainly exhaustible, but that is no reason why it need be exhausted. Any man who wishes to keep his sexual abilities as a lover must begin learning to know his sexual limits early in life, and having learnt them he must respect that knowledge. His reward will be a happy and vigorous old age.

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